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A COACHING FRAMEWORK:
SUPPORTING MAINSTREAM TEACHERS IN INCORPORATING
ACADEMIC-LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT FOR ENGLISH LEARNERS

by

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A capstone project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Research Question

As an English-language teacher for more than a decade, my understanding of language development has matured in great capacity. Early in my instruction, I focused on the nuances of the English language, because they were interesting to me. I quickly learned, however, that elementary students were not interested in knowing the name for the *-ing* ending (gerund), or that spelling in English was often arbitrarily chosen in order for words to fit on the pages of the first printing presses. I moved from an interest in the minutiae of language to an interest in creatively engaging my English learners (ELs) in producing academic language similar to their native-English-speaking peers. This growth took years of daily experience and my own professional development.

Now, in the last two years, I have had the privilege of coaching mainstream colleagues in incorporating English academic-language development into their instruction. And while these teachers are eager to build their teaching craft, in my experience, coaching has been less productive than expected. I have spent the last decade honing skills in teaching the English language, while these teachers have received six hours of language-focused professional development. This gap led me to the research question: *What coaching practices and materials will effectively support mainstream*

teachers in implementing academic-language development for English learners? The objective of this project was thus to develop a research-based coaching framework focused on academic-language development, to be implemented by English Learners in the Mainstream (ELM) Coaches in the Twin Cities School District (pseudonym). For this capstone project, a coaching framework is defined as the coaching approach, structure, content, and support materials needed to implement coaching between ELM-trained EL teachers and mainstream teachers. This project addresses the need for a comprehensive structure for EL teachers who are coaching mainstream teachers in integrating academic-language-development opportunities into content instruction.

In this chapter, the context for this research question is provided, including my teaching background and the situation in the district that demonstrates the need for the proposed materials. The significance of this project is discussed in regard to the district's current coaches, mainstream teachers, and English-language students.

Teaching Experience and Shifts in Instruction

My first year as an EL teacher was in an urban elementary school in Minnesota, with a high population of Karen and Hmong students, and I had the privilege of working in one fifth-grade classroom and one sixth-grade classroom. My teaching consisted mostly of grammar and vocabulary instruction—either what was highlighted in the literacy curriculum or what interested me from my recent graduate studies. I would posit that the year was a success, but not because of the English instruction the students received; rather, the students entered into the learning space and took risks in ways that were not comfortable for them in their grade-level classrooms. English learners tend to

keep a low profile in their mainstream classes, as they may see language development as a hindrance; students from Hmong and Karen backgrounds are also generally quiet and reserved. This combination of beginner-level language proficiency and cultural background caused these students to avoid attention. In the language-specific classroom, however, these same students arrived with grins on their faces, ready for the challenge. By the end of the school year, they were more willing to raise their hands to teacher prompts, particularly after they were exposed to pre-teaching on specific content and language concepts.

The following year, I worked with linguistically diverse adults earning their GEDs, and my instruction turned heavily to literature and composition in a more traditional English Language Arts capacity, rather than English-language development. The students engaged in conversation around classic short stories, and their greatest successes involved grappling with new concepts and ways of thinking, and not necessarily in making progress toward proficiency with the English language.

When I returned to teaching English to elementary students, I realized that my knowledge of how to teach the English language seemed inadequate to meet their needs. Most of my instructional time with students had been focused on helping them feel comfortable in their learning environments, or in covering interesting literature, rather than consistently providing language-specific instruction. Though I was trained in teaching the English language, I did not know how to apply that knowledge. At the same time, I was keenly aware of the pressure of student reading achievement. This teaching context provided me with the opportunity to co-teach during the literacy block; the

teachers that I worked with on a daily basis were inundated with data around state standards and assessments and consistently pointed out that many of the ELs were below grade level according to these standards. Consequently, my instruction focused on helping the ELs keep up with grade-level texts and assisting in their writing assignments so that they could attain grade-level standards, even though that meant helping students catch up to their peers rather than providing language-rich instruction for their own development and learning. Several years into this situation, I had a consistent feeling that I was missing the mark with my instruction—that the students were capable of learning more, of achieving more. It was not enough to simply provide them with extra time and support to finish their assignments; these students needed direct, explicit language instruction that scaffolded into their grade-level work. I acknowledged the need for this shift in instructional focus, but I did not yet feel equipped to provide meaningful academic-language instruction to support students in their growth toward English-language proficiency.

While working for the district, the EL Supervisor role turned over frequently, which led to multiple shifts in the focus of language teaching in the EL department. Each new leader brought fresh perspectives to language-development instruction. The supervisor that hired me was focused on relationships with students and building their sense of safety in our schools. The next supervisor focused on academic language and functions within language, and co-taught content and language simultaneously. The current supervisor has focused on genre pedagogy and academic-language-production opportunities. Over the course of these leadership transitions, I learned about how to

support English learners in their academic success, and, through a variety of professional development opportunities, my own instruction has shifted toward more substantial, meaningful, and engaging language development.

Currently, my instruction focuses on teaching the academic language that students need in order to identify, define, and produce at their appropriate grade level. I include daily oral and written language production for all of my students at varying proficiency levels. My goal is to work toward engaging students in meaningful ways that they can then directly use in their grade-level classrooms.

My shift in instruction—away from abstract language concepts and toward meaningful academic-language development—happened gradually with the guidance of experts, and through trial, error, and learning. This brings me to the reason for this research project.

Context and Rationale

English learners. One of the most significant challenges that English learners face is the need for processing time. Students who need to translate from a new language into a first language and back again require more time than native-English-speaking peers; the processes that come automatically for native-English speakers involve several more steps for English learners. Furthermore, students with innate knowledge of a first language—of text organization, technical vocabulary, and nuances of language—acquire that knowledge through years of language input, and while some students who are learning English already have those skills in the first language, some do not. Neither has them yet in English. The automaticity with which native-English-speaking peers can tell

a story or recount a science experiment does not come naturally for an English learner. Not only do these students need more time to process the depth and breadth of the language required, ELs also need explicit instruction of academic language in order to know which vocabulary and sentence structures to choose in an academic setting.

English learners need multiple opportunities to interact with the new language, particularly in the context of their core-content learning. The instruction that ELs receive during English-language development services is beneficial, but it is not enough. It takes repeated attempts, mistakes, and acknowledged corrections for students to become comfortable with the academic language that leads to their unconscious automaticity.

The ELM Project. Two years ago, I had the opportunity to engage in professional development in a program made possible through a federal grant at Hamline University. The English Learners in the Mainstream (ELM) Project “addresses the needs of English learners in the K-12 school system through intentional training of mainstream classroom teachers” (Mabbot, Benegas, & Stopelstad, n.d.). Teachers of ELs are trained to provide professional development and coaching for their mainstream colleagues within their school context, in order to provide more language-development opportunities for English learners throughout the school day. This program is of the “teach a man to fish” mentality, that by equipping classroom and content teachers with knowledge of, and strategies for, language development, students will have greater access to content and will in turn be more likely to achieve grade-level success through embedded academic-language development.

Each coach attends a two-day training that provides tools and strategies for coaching, as well as time to create an action plan to implement the coaching process at each coach's site. The Project requires two outcomes from the coaches: that they provide at least six hours of professional development around topics related to English-language development and/or the needs of ELs, and that they coach mainstream teachers throughout the year in implementing that knowledge.

ELM in the district. To date, this suburban school district has 11 trained ELM Coaches, at all levels (elementary, middle, and secondary). Last year, I was hired as the EL Elementary Lead Teacher for the district, and one of my responsibilities has been to facilitate this group of Coaches through the coaching process for each of their sites. This entails leading regular meetings, collaborating around professional development, meeting with individual Coaches, and supporting these professionals in their coaching situations.

Each of the Coaches is highly committed to the idea that, as advocates for ELs, part of our role is equipping mainstream colleagues with knowledge and strategies to effectively instruct ELs within content instruction. Most of the mainstream teachers have received minimal training in working with ELs, and, as such, lean into training in other areas. Knowing that our colleagues need more knowledge and experience in language-development instruction, the Coaches have implemented professional development in a variety of language-specific topics, and then have individually coached the mainstream teachers to include those language-development opportunities in classroom instruction.

At the end of the 2018-2019 school year, the group of ELM Coaches gathered together to reflect on the year's successes and challenges. Each shared excitement about

the feedback received from the professional development. And overwhelmingly, each shared their frustration with the coaching portion. While finding the time to meet with the teaching partners poses a major challenge, the aspect that the Coaches found most difficult was that the coaching conversations did not seem to lead to a significant change in teacher practices. Several Coaches discussed the feeling that there was not enough substance in the conversations to provide meaningful feedback and/or support. Another issue was that the mainstream partners were still so new to the concept of language development that they did not have the experience or the automaticity in how to reflect on what worked or on what needed improvement. Overall, the ELM-trained Coaches felt that the coaching portion needed further development in order to be effective in supporting significant and meaningful change to teachers' current instructional practices.

Current coaching process and its challenges. Typically, coaching has centered around what the mainstream teachers have requested when provided with a menu of options, such as writing academic-language objectives or incorporating oral language practice opportunities. The challenge with this approach is that the teachers receive a thorough yet short professional development session, and while this information is interesting, it remains an overview. The teachers develop just enough knowledge to be intrigued, but not enough to know how to focus their coaching support. Coaches have seen that this may lead to a lack of motivation in pursuing instructional change, simply because the knowledge is superficial. There is minimal time in the teachers' already full workdays, and the teachers have not had the opportunity to interact more deeply with the newfound knowledge. With this potentially limited knowledge base, teachers gravitate

toward the perceived familiarity of academic-language objectives, but soon revert to asking the EL teacher to provide ideas within the content lesson, and have a difficult time directly applying knowledge without support.

Another challenging factor in the current coaching process is the inevitable limitation of time. In order for the learned-language instructional practices to become automatic and natural for these teachers, more time is needed with the ELM Coach to discuss possibilities, to watch the EL teacher implement meaningful language instruction, and to process how these opportunities affect both ELs and other students who may be struggling with content mastery.

A third challenge is the teachers' self-efficacy in applying new language-development knowledge. I have learned that, in order to effect significant change within my own teaching, I need to spend time in a meaningful reflective process with a colleague who is also knowledgeable in that field. The problem with reflective practices in education, at least in our district, is that reflection has too often been linked with performance pay, and the process has become a hoop to jump through, rather than a tool for positive and significant change. The Coaches felt hindered by this mindset.

The project. Given the limitations of the district's current scope of coaching, I developed a coaching framework that applies research in the fields of language development, coaching, and reflective practices to be used by the ELM Coaches in our district. For the purpose of this project, the term *framework* will refer to all aspects of the coaching process, including the overall structure of the coaching model and all materials designed for implementation; the term *guide* will refer to the consumable resource

developed for use by the ELM Coaches. In order to design this framework, I examined academic-language acquisition, development strategies, and necessary language skills as the content of the coaching model; I researched effective coaching models that include constructive modeling, support processes, and an iterative cycle; and I explored reflective practices that lead to sustainable instructional change for mainstream teachers working with English learners.

Significance for Stakeholders

This project has profound importance for several stakeholders beyond myself. The ELM Coaches expressed a need for specific coaching direction in order to provide mainstream partners with a meaningful coaching experience. This coaching framework offers a specific structure with tools and resources to provide that kind of coaching. Throughout the process of designing the framework, the Coaches provided feedback and insight for what this resource should include in the district's context.

Along with the current Coaches, this framework will impact the mainstream teachers. It will provide a stronger coaching structure and specific direction to guide the teachers' knowledge and skill acquisition in implementing academic language-development opportunities.

The third, and perhaps most important, stakeholders to be affected by this coaching framework are the English learners who will be exposed to increased language-development opportunities within the context of core content instruction. The purpose behind the process of coaching mainstream teachers is ultimately to create a more academic-language-rich environment for students developing proficiency in the

English language. By providing research-based coaching support from trained EL teachers to mainstream teachers, language learners will directly benefit from significant changes in teacher instructional practices.

Summary

My teaching experience and professional development have led me to acknowledge that language acquisition is a long and demanding process. English learners face daily educational challenges, and receiving language-specific instruction and opportunities to practice using that language just once during their school day can only move them so far toward English-language proficiency. English learners need increased opportunities to master the language; in order to do so, ELs need trained teachers to provide those opportunities. The ELM Project through Hamline University seeks to train EL teachers to support their mainstream colleagues in doing just that. Even through implementing this coaching project in our district, however, we have experienced limitations to teacher change and growth, and have attributed that to a minimally structured coaching process. Therefore, I am seeking to answer the question: *What coaching practices and materials will effectively support mainstream teachers in implementing academic-language development for English learners?* I designed a coaching framework that addresses the challenges of our current coaching model, rooted in language development skills and strategies, effective research-based coaching models, and reflective practices. I believe this will be of great impact to the ELM-trained EL Coaches in our district, their partner mainstream teachers, and the EL students in their grade-level instruction.

Chapter two reviews literature and research related to the topics within the research question, including academic-language development, effective coaching models with constructive modeling and support processes, and reflective practices. Chapter three explains the coaching framework, including the context and audience for which it is intended, describes each of the components that constitute the framework, and justifies the design of the framework. Chapter four provides an overview of the entire process of this capstone project, describes significant learning through researching and creating the framework, and discusses the implications of the coaching framework.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Literature

Introduction

English learners comprise a rapidly growing number of students within the public school system in the United States; as of 2016, nearly 10% of students enrolled in Pre-K through grade 12 qualified to receive English services (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2019). With the increased number of students who require specific learning needs comes the challenge of equipping educators to meet those needs. Many mainstream teachers have received minimal training in language instruction, and EL teachers are overloaded or underutilized. There is an enormous need to disseminate knowledge from EL teachers' language-specific instructional practices into the mainstream classroom. A promising possibility in bridging this gap is coaching between EL teachers and mainstream teachers that incorporates reflective practice. Limited resources exist that combine coaching practices with language-acquisition instruction; therefore, this capstone seeks to find answers to the following question: *What coaching practices and materials will effectively support mainstream teachers in implementing academic-language development for English learners?* Answers to this question may be found through a thorough look at current and pertinent research of three significant factors: language development, effective coaching models, and reflective practices.

Overview of the chapter. The following chapter is a review of literature pertaining to language development, coaching models, and reflective practices in education. Language learning is a challenging process; language development instruction involves engaging English learners in this complex process. The section on language development defines salient terms, describes aspects of second-language acquisition, and discusses issues around mainstream teachers' beliefs toward ELs and the training in language development received in teacher preparation programs. Following that is a section that discusses coaching models within education: it describes models supported by influential leaders in the field of educational coaching, identifies features of effective coaching, and considers coaching approaches created for specific contexts. The third section focuses on reflective practices in education, which reviews original theories of reflective thinking and reflection in professional practice and then describes contextualized reflective practices. Finally, a rationale is presented for how the literature base influences this current capstone project and addresses the research question.

English-Language Development

Definitions and explanations. English-language development encompasses many aspects of both teaching and learning, some of which have evolved over the course of time. The following section will define and explain the terms and concepts pertinent to this capstone.

English learners. English learners (ELs) are students who speak a language other than English in any capacity, as indicated in Minnesota on the MN Home Language Survey. An EL is qualified to receive English-language development services as assessed

in Minnesota by the WIDA (the organization previously known as World-class Instructional Design and Assessment) screener. Once a student qualifies for services, the student is assigned a proficiency level and given language-specific instruction at that level, with the goal of guiding the student to proficiency in English. English learners can also include other subsets of students who speak another language at home, such as those who did not qualify for services, or those whose parents declined services. These students may use English proficiently but still have academic gaps in content knowledge due to multiple-language usage. Another subset influenced by potential gaps in content knowledge or academic language are students who received English services at one point as K-12 students, but have since qualified as proficient, and have exited the program. For the purpose of this study, the term English learners (ELs) may encompass all of these learners with diverse linguistic backgrounds.

Proficiency levels. WIDA determines six levels of language proficiency, and these levels are assigned both a numerical value and a descriptive title. Level one students are at the beginning stages of learning English; levels five and six students have English skills similar to those of a native English student (see Appendix A for a detailed description of the proficiency levels).

Language domains. There are four distinct areas of language usage: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Each function overlaps with the others, and are learned and used simultaneously. English learners typically develop receptive language skills—listening and reading—first, followed by the productive language skills—speaking and writing. Social language is primarily considered as the oral

language skills of listening and speaking; academic language centers around the written language skills of reading and writing. Neither of these categories is exclusive, however, as academic language is necessary for both oral and written language skills.

When taught in combination with each other, the four language domains (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) can work within a whole-language approach to literacy development. Pérez (1994) concluded that “whole language and phonics can form a complementary basis for literacy instruction. In this scheme, whole language involves using quality children’s literature, writing, and assuring that skills are applied in the context of reading/writing, rather than treated as isolated exercises” (pp. 91-92).

Academic language. The language necessary for success in an academic setting is different than the language necessary to communicate within social contexts. Basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) are the language skills needed to communicate basic needs and conversation. “Social language is characterized as interpersonal and dependent on the culture of the communication, such as tone of voice, facial expressions, body movements, and turn taking” (Lee, 2004, p. 68). Cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) comprises the language skills necessary to understand and produce language in an academic context. “Academic language is characterized as linguistically rigorous and cognitively demanding. It is also the language of school instruction where understanding depends on knowledge of academic content and genre” (Lee, 2004, p. 68). For the purpose of this paper, CALP will be referred to more succinctly as *academic language*.

Factors influencing language development. English learners enter the U.S. school system with varied exposure to education and/or the English language. Some students were born in the United States and have been raised in multi-language environments; other students enroll in a school within days of arrival, sometimes with educated and literate backgrounds, sometimes with limited or interrupted schooling. Diverse language students may bring experiences of trauma, refugee status, poverty, or other difficult circumstances. Another group is long-term ELs (LTELs), who require a much longer period of time to acquire proficiency in English than what is typical of their peers, without evidence for a specific underlying cause. A smaller group of ELs also receive services within Special Education, which presents unique challenges for those learners.

Second Language Acquisition. While much has evolved since early theories in Second Language Acquisition (SLA), current English-language instructional practices stem loosely from those early theories. Behaviorists theorized that language is a learned behavior, resulting from stimuli and consequences, rather than through mental processes (VanPatten & Williams, 2007). Stephen Krashen (1987) posited that a second language is learned mostly through unconscious acquisition, rather than through specific learned chunks of language, but that a learner needs access to language slightly above the current level of understanding and production. From these early theories and subsequent research, researchers of SLA have moved toward defining language acquisition instead through how it is used in context.

Systemic Functional Linguistics. Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), a theory practiced for decades in the Australian education system, maintains that language is used for specific purposes, and therefore must be learned and understood within the context for which it is intended. First-language learners acquire language through exposure, repetition, exploration, and discovery. As a child develops his or her first language, he or she links concepts and solidifies correct usage innately, moving toward automaticity in understanding and production of that language. SFL theorizes that a second language is acquired similarly and that, in order for a language learner to make meaning both in understanding language and in producing it, the user must interact with the language within context for its intended purpose (Halliday, 2007).

Genre pedagogy. Genre pedagogy, as studied by Maria Brisk at Boston University, brings SFL to the United States' school system, and applies the concepts to the specific types of academic language that are necessary for students to be successful at each grade level. The language needed to read a primary source in history is vastly different than the language needed to read a novel. Similarly, the language a student needs in order to produce a procedural recount is not the same language the student needs to tell a personal narrative. Writers make language choices depending on the purpose for writing; likewise, readers understand texts within the purpose of their being written (Brisk, 2015). According to the WIDA English Language Development Standards, ELs need to be able to communicate for social and instructional purposes, as well as to “communicate the information, ideas and concepts” (WIDA, 2018, The Five Standards section) for the language of language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science. These

standards are broad directives for all K-12 students and can be further understood by looking at the grade-level expectations as described in state standards. Genre pedagogy uses purposeful and explicit language choices for instruction in specific genres.

The theory of SFL and subsequent application of genre pedagogy can be helpful tools in providing language learners with contextual academic-language instruction and development.

Academic language in content areas. Acquiring academic language within the context of content knowledge is challenging and absolutely necessary for EL success in the mainstream classroom. Zwiers (2014) encouraged mainstream teachers to model and scaffold language acquisition for ELs in the classroom. English learners need explicit instruction about seemingly obvious information, a large amount of language-production opportunities, and the ability to develop strategies to negotiate meaning. These learners need teachers to model academic language in context, and to engage in a gradual release of responsibility to work toward automaticity in using academic language.

Language-development challenges in content instruction. Students in an academic PreK-12 setting are expected to function within the context of classroom instruction, which is primarily in English in general education. Thus, in mainstream classroom settings, most ELs have minimal access to their native languages. English-language teachers receive training to provide English-language development, but often do not, or are unable to, connect linguistic instruction to content knowledge. Simultaneously, mainstream teachers develop skills to provide content-specific instruction, often with limited development of language-instructional knowledge and

strategies (Lee, 2004). Therefore, ELs receive compartmentalized instruction with minimal support in transferring skills and knowledge from one learning context to another.

Mainstream teacher training in language development. Historically, mainstream teachers have received minimal language-development training through teacher preparation programs (Garcia, Arias, Murri, & Serna, 2010). There is no set curriculum or mandated standard across the nation that offers requirements for preparation in language development. Requirements in preparatory programs vary greatly in setting the breadth of knowledge necessary to be trained and subsequently licensed to be a teacher. According to federal law, “...school districts must provide research-based professional development to any teachers, administrators, and staff who work with ELs” (Education Commission of the States, 2018, Federal Law section). Currently, more than half of the states fall back on this mandate without requiring EL pre-service training for general classroom teachers, and, according to Lindahl, “it mostly falls to institutions at the state and local level to interpret that provision” (2019, p. 85); of the states that do go above and beyond the federal guidelines, “the requirements vary greatly” (Lindahl, 2019, p. 85).

In 2018, many teacher-training programs minimally required teacher candidates to work with ELs through practicum placement or tutoring, and incorporated coursework on internal beliefs about ELs, but did not link these experiences to effective language theory, pedagogy, or strategies (Villegas, Saiz de La Mora, Martin, & Mills, 2018).

Minimal preparation in language-development knowledge and strategies for pre-service teachers often leads new teachers to under-serve EL students. Gersten (1999)

studied four novice teachers in a low-income, high-EL-population school, who were in the first year of teaching and had received no training in English-language development. He wanted to look at the challenges faced in working with EL students. Gersten found that the teachers had a strong desire to connect instruction with meaningful language development, but that the teachers also struggled with the expectation that these same students needed to produce high-level conventions of English in writing. This dichotomy often caused teachers to lean into heavy modifications that did not challenge the students, but provided students with busy work. Gersten implied that these actions were due to the teachers' original lack of training and support around English-language development.

Even with EL-specific coursework in teacher-preparation programs, mainstream teachers may face difficulties in implementing language-instructional practices. Coady, Harper, and de Jong (2016) did a mixed-methods case study around two teachers who received language-instruction training, and, due to the small population of EL students in the classroom, depended on last-minute scaffolding, rather than planned, intentional language instruction to support the learning of ELs.

Some teacher-training programs and professional-development offerings recommend general teaching strategies as language-development techniques, and teachers come away from these professional trainings believing that common-sense approaches to instruction will be enough for ELs to be successful. Teachers are then often baffled when these strategies are effectively implemented and ELs still do not reach anticipated grade-level mastery similar to their English-speaking peers (Harper & de Jong, 2009).

Mainstream teachers expressed feeling under-equipped and ill-prepared to teach language, as the teacher-preparation coursework did not build confidence in language usage or instruction (Lindahl, 2019). Recommendations from Lindahl included embedding language-development instruction into pedagogical coursework, rather than requiring a separate, theory-based language acquisition course.

There are signs that the situation may be improving, according to results from teacher and administrator responses to recent surveys (McGraw-Hill, 2017 and 2019). The surveys found that, in 2019, two-thirds of the teachers and administrators claimed sufficient training in providing language-development instruction, a drastic increase from the 2017 results that reported that only 39% of those surveyed were confident in the training received. These findings are slightly skewed, however, as the group surveyed in 2019 was less than 500, and the 2017 group contained more than 1,300 participants.

There remains a discord between the need for classroom teachers to develop language in classroom contexts and the training provided that would enable teachers to do so. Milk, Mercado, and Sapiens (1992) stated,

the challenge for teacher education shifts to how to prepare teachers (both beginning and experienced) to move from wherever they happen to be in their current approach to teaching toward becoming the kind of professionals who can create an optimal learning environment for language minority students. (p. 4)

Mainstream teacher beliefs about English learners. Mainstream teachers may hold different implicit beliefs about ELs than what is explicitly stated. In a 2018 analysis of 197 middle- and high-school teachers, 55% had a negative attitude toward ELs in the

content area of instruction, 27% were neutral, and 18% had a positive attitude. Yet overwhelmingly, these same teachers explicitly claimed a positive outlook on ELs (Harrison & Lakin, 2018). This mismatch of internal and external beliefs around the capabilities of EL students in mastering content may inadvertently cause mainstream teachers to make conscious and unconscious decisions with regard to how instruction is delivered for the English learners.

Often, and unfortunately, those instructional decisions may affect student achievement. Over the course of a study by Neufeld and Fitzgerald (2001), which looked at reading development of three low-reading English-language learners who spoke Spanish, the students showed no growth over the course of the school year. At the beginning of the year, the teachers determined that, due to low English proficiency, these students were not yet ready to read, and believed that ELs could not develop these skills simultaneously. The researchers concluded, in part, that the students' limited growth over the year was influenced by these teachers' beliefs about them.

The beliefs that teachers hold about students may limit teachers' ability to differentiate for ELs. Findings from a study done by Reyes (1991) about a holistic approach to literacy instruction are significant; the study concluded that English learners do not need to have complete control over the English language before beginning to write, but the development of ideas and construction of text is significantly impacted by English proficiency. The teachers working with students in this study, however, refrained from supporting the students' reading choices and had seemed to assume that what works for native English users also works for ELs, with no modification.

Mainstream classroom instruction for English learners. Mainstream teachers have differentiated instruction for decades. This differentiation positively affects ELs, along with native-English speakers (Shanahan & Beck, 2006). Along with balanced literacy instruction, mainstream teachers may incorporate Daily 5 (Boushey & Moser, 2006), Readers' and Writers' Workshops (Calkins, 2019), small-group targeted literacy instruction, word-level and text-level skills, and further interventions when needed. And yet, all of this differentiation and scaffolding does not seem to be effective for ELs reaching toward English proficiency. A study conducted by Peregoy and Boyle (1991) found that the ELs who benefited from comprehension-skills instruction were those already high in English proficiency, and that beginner-level English students showed no positive effect from instruction around comprehension. Mainstream teachers are indeed doing an amazing job; however, ELs need a different set of instructional skills in order to move forward in literacy and language proficiency. In a report done by Shanahan and Beck (2006) for the National Literacy Panel, a summary of 17 studies concluded that, overall, instruction around comprehension strategies had little to no effect on ELs' comprehension. English learners are being instructed in the same way as native-English peers, and these strategies are not helping language learners grasp the content knowledge or academic language necessary for grade-level success.

Gersten and Jiménez (1994) determined that a quality literacy program includes eight necessary components: implicit and explicit challenging of students, active involvement of all students, providing activities that students can complete successfully, scaffolding instruction for students through such techniques as building and clarifying

student input and using visual organizers, teacher mediation/feedback to students, classroom use of collaborative/cooperative learning, techniques for second-language acquisition/sheltered English, and respect for cultural diversity. Although these are research-based effective practices for all learners, often ELs are overlooked in these instructional practices. These practices need to be intentionally inclusive of ELs.

Processing time needed for English learners. Students are learning literacy skills and content knowledge while simultaneously developing language, which requires more processing time. Educators need to provide ample instructional time for modeling, guided practice, and independent application in order for language learners to achieve language proficiency and master grade-level content. “Thus, English language learners must perform double the work of native English speakers. . . . And at the same time, they are being held to the same accountability standards as their native English-speaking peers” (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007, p. 1). The level of rigor for ELs remains at a seemingly impossibly high standard considering the innumerable cognitive connections and translations that they make every minute of every school day. Teachers traditionally provide just enough time for the quickest minds to respond before moving on to the next lesson objective; teachers also often set up units with specific start and end dates in mind, which caters to the students who are capable of a certain pace. It is not that teachers need to lower expectations for ELs; language learners are fully capable of rigorous learning and achievement. In order for them to show that mastery, however, these students need more time.

Fitzgerland and Noblit (2000) emphasized the need for longer processing time, as well. These researchers conducted a naturalistic study of emergent reading development for first-grade students based on a balanced literacy approach. The instruction included word study (such as sight words), phonics and structural analysis, response to literature, writing, and both guided and individual reading practice. Four themes emerged. Students were able to:

- build knowledge through word-level skills;
- recognize that reading was about comprehension and communication;
- show a further desire for reading opportunities;
- make deeper connections with the text and each other.

Fitzgerald and Noblit determined, significantly, that ELs and lower-level readers needed more time to achieve the same gains as strong readers.

Significance of these needs and gaps. In order to implement effective instruction for ELs within a classroom context, it is clear that explicit instruction in both literacy skills *and* language development is needed.

Several elementary schools examined by McLeod (1995) for having high-quality language-arts programs within adverse contexts showed that ELs were incorporated into school communities in meaningful ways. English learners were given effective, high-quality instruction, rather than remediation, and focused on reading and writing in multiple genres, including discussion, interpretation, and analysis of high-quality literature. English learners were seen as an asset to the school, along with their cultures

and languages, and were encouraged to employ both native language and English in the learning processes.

Mainstream teachers may often see the pressing need for literacy instruction before other content-area instruction for ELs, however. Lee (2004) studied teachers developing instructional congruence, which merges content instruction, cultural experience, and language acquisition. Over the course of a three-year study, which included professional development, large- and small-group discussion, and observations with feedback, six Spanish-English bilingual teachers transitioned internal beliefs around ELs. Initially, these students were seen as incapable of grasping science content; after the study, however, the teachers saw language learners as intelligent, capable students who needed cultural and linguistic support to master the content. Instructional practices changed from rote recitation or single-word answers after teacher-dominated experiments to student-oriented, rich discussions that synthesized ideas and concepts. Teachers started the process by not understanding how culture can play a role in content-area instruction, especially in science; after focusing on how to incorporate reflective practices, these teachers saw culture as a “type of prior knowledge” (Lee, 2004, p. 78) that students bring to learning. Teachers’ attempts to incorporate language instruction initially included having students read and write about the topics, without scaffolding into those literacy skills. Once teachers started to embrace hands-on learning activities, they engaged the students in oral practice opportunities to scaffold into later writing opportunities; teachers also began to implement academic-language development opportunities when assigning reading of science materials and responding to scientific prompts. Through this study,

Lee (2004) showed that, consistent with human behavior, teacher beliefs can change, given sufficient time, training, and reflective opportunities.

Teachers tend to base new learning on experiences built in the classroom and through the lens of previous learning (Brown, 2016). Since mainstream teachers typically have not received concrete training focused on language development and instruction, the lens through which this practice is seen is from experiences with intervention or struggling students. It is important to co-construct the knowledge of language development through an asset-based perspective; teachers need to see the intelligence and concentration it takes to learn a new language, and that language-specific instruction can significantly support language learners working toward language proficiency through the context of content instruction.

Conversely, even when several mainstream teachers did create a positive classroom posture toward ELs, these teachers still expressed the need for tangible professional development in order to successfully bridge content knowledge with academic-language learning (Martin, 2019).

Summary of English-language development. English-language development is a challenging and rigorous process. Students who qualify for English services and are considered ELs encounter many barriers to academic success in the U.S. school system. Not only do these students need access to high-quality English-specific instruction by a trained EL teacher, they also need further access to language-development opportunities throughout the school day, within the context of content instruction.

Language-development instruction is also a demanding responsibility, one for which teachers may not be thoroughly prepared. Mainstream teachers are often minimally equipped to provide quality language instruction and may harbor misconceptions of the capabilities of ELs. “In essence, in today’s landscape where 4.5 million public students are ELs in the U.S. alone, teacher training programs need to include required language and culture training courses” (Huerta, Garza, Jackson, & Murukutla, 2019, p. 9). If mainstream teachers were more fully equipped to provide effective language-development opportunities, ELs would be empowered to work successfully toward the high standards and expectations that teachers have for all students.

Coaching Models in Education

The practice of coaching teachers with the intention of furthering professional development and creating positive change in teachers’ instructional practices has been implemented for generations of teachers (Goker, 2005; Lofthouse, 2019; Teemant, 2014). Among the many coaching models, there are a few significant approaches that apply to the purpose of this study, supported by leaders in the field of coaching. Knight (2006) proposed instructional coaching; Costa, Ellison, Hayes, and Garmston (2015) advocated for cognitive coaching, which is sometimes connected with facilitative coaching (Knight, 2017); Aguilar (2013) supported aspects of directive or authoritative coaching. These styles, along with hundreds of others, have been documented thoroughly in the literature. This section will give a brief overview of these coaching approaches, followed by key features of effective coaching models, and will cover a review of literature around coaching practices that have been developed to fit unique situations and contexts.

Instructional coaching. First proposed in 1999 as *partnership coaching*, Knight spent the last 20 years refining theory and practice around instructional coaching. At its core, Knight defined instructional coaching as “a non-evaluative, learning relationship between a professional developer and a teacher, both of whom share the expressed goal of learning together, thereby improving instruction and student achievement” (2006, No Quick Fix section, para. 3).

Knight (2011) centered this approach around seven principles: equality, choice, voice, reflection, dialogue, praxis, and reciprocity. *Equality* refers to the partners’ reciprocity with each other, within the expertise brought to the relationship and the ongoing vulnerability maintained. *Choice* means that the teacher being coached has autonomy in the process, but also leans into the structure of the coaching model. *Voice* is about valuing the perspectives of each individual involved in the coaching process, that each person should be heard fully and intentionally. *Reflection* is the ability of the coach to empower the partner teacher to think for him/herself. *Dialogue* shows mutual respect, as each partner engages in meaningful, profound, and extensive conversation. *Praxis* means that teachers apply the new learning directly to instruction, reflect upon its success or challenges, and continue to grow accordingly in instructional practice. Finally, *reciprocity* is when both partners enter the coaching relationship with the belief that both will learn and be changed through the mutual understanding of each other’s expertise and experience. The power of this coaching approach is in its partnership between two experts; both the coach and the partner are teacher practitioners in similar or different fields who engage in conversation around effective instructional and reflective practices

with the ultimate outcome of increased student achievement. The coach's role is to empower the partner teacher as he or she implements new instructional practices in a sustainable way.

Facilitative or cognitive coaching. Facilitative and cognitive coaching both seek to empower the teacher to think independently and to reach within his or her own knowledge and experience to problem-solve (Aguilar, 2013; Costa et al., 2015; Knight, 2017). The coach does not act as an expert, but rather a “sounding board” (Whitmore, 2002, as cited in Knight, 2017) to encourage the teacher to process the situation on his or her own. The coach's job is to ask pertinent, open-ended questions to guide the teacher's reflective process.

Directive coaching. Directive coaching is an approach that Aguilar (2013) described as necessary when a teacher is stuck in his or her thinking or does not have the necessary background knowledge or experience to determine a solution independently. She leaned heavily into Heron's work (as cited in Aguilar, 2013) around authoritative coaching, which stems from the Six Category Intervention Analysis. Aguilar pinpointed three coaching approaches in particular when coaching directly: confrontational, informative, and prescriptive. Confrontational coaching is used when a teacher needs to interrupt his or her own thinking in order to see another perspective. Informative coaching gives new ideas, concepts, or strategies just beyond the teacher's current practices, in order to encourage the teacher to try new skills. Prescriptive coaching is rule-oriented and redirects the teacher's behaviors that may be out of district or educational alignment.

Features of effective coaching models. While there are many possible forms of coaching, research has found there to be common characteristics and benefits of effective coaching.

Components of effective coaching. Coaching in an educational context has proven to benefit teachers in the pursuit of quality instructional practices. One effective coaching structure is described as having cyclical features. Brown (2016) provided a conceptual framework that cycles through professional development, instructional implementation, and coaching. This cycle supported a development journey for coached teachers to process new knowledge and skills through a coaching process, which facilitated value and expertise reciprocally. Similarly, two coaches in a study by Lofthouse (2019) applied a cycle of coaching, which consisted of co-planning a lesson, observing the lesson via video so both people could review, and a post-lesson discussion. Along these iterative lines, the Vermont Agency of Education (2016) advocated for coaching models that include “continuous support, communication, and collaboration; ongoing quality professional development embedded in daily practice; data analysis, interpretation and action; collaborative, reflective practice; collective problem solving; relationship building; and collegial conversations about instructional practices and systemic change” (p. 6). Killion (2002) detailed three major components of effective coaching: building teachers’ knowledge bases, changing teachers’ attitudes about instruction and student populations, and building capacity with specific skills in instruction.

Impacts of effective coaching. Joyce and Showers (2002) were some of the first researchers to look into the impact of peer coaching, beginning work in the 1980s and continuing to add to the field. The research, which significantly influenced thinking and application in the field of peer coaching, supported five major outcomes of the peer coaching model:

- teachers who have been coached tend to apply learned knowledge and skills more frequently than uncoached teachers;
- coached teachers engaged in meaningful conversations with coaches around effective implementation of standards-based instruction and subsequently applied that knowledge in the classroom;
- coached teachers sustained and sometimes increased upon the new instructional skills worked on with the coach;
- coached teachers applied meta-cognition strategies to student learning which led to deeper student autonomy of learning;
- and finally, as coached teachers became familiar with the new knowledge and skills, these teachers were able to use them more creatively and with different purposes for different contexts.

Kraft, Blazar, and Hogan (2018) determined through a meta-analysis of 60 studies that teacher-coaching programs had a large positive effect on instruction, and a smaller, yet still substantial positive effect on student achievement, but that more evidence was needed to determine how effective coaching fits in with larger professional-development initiatives.

Coaching approaches developed for specific contexts. Coaches in individual school and district settings often create a coaching model that is specific to that context. Either independently or together with administration, coaches determine what approach is appropriate, sometimes grounded in the previously mentioned models, often created uniquely for a particular purpose and/or situation (Lofthouse, 2019).

Directive coaching in context. Directive coaching tends to be overlooked as a useful strategy in increasingly inward-focused cultures. Because teaching is often thought of as an innate talent, coaching that focuses on directly instructing in a specific skill or strategy can be seen as micro-managing or controlling. Teachers in Australia, however, started to incorporate explicit instruction after it was reported in 2012 to be one of the most essential qualities of effective teachers and to positively impact student success through showing the *what* and the *how* of instruction, rather than always relying on self-discovery (Hammond & Moore, 2018). As teachers implemented explicit instruction in the classroom, teachers expressed the desire for further professional development on how to do so effectively—directive coaching models were subsequently adopted.

Hammond and Moore (2018) studied the effectiveness of this model, which included ten hours of professional development delivered by an outside expert, who then coached participants through observations and feedback in order to assist the teacher in acquiring the new skills successfully. “Thus this approach differed from commonly used coaching methods in that it was highly focused, evaluative and directive. The tone was designed to be both warm and positive, but the feedback was deliberately both specific and clear” (Hammond & Moore, 2018, p. 117).

The results of this study showed that teachers coached through this directive model were positively impacted through evidence of growth in instructional practices over the course of the observations and feedback. Directive coaching was shown to be an effective approach in bringing about teacher change in instructional practices.

Another form of directive coaching that could positively impact instructional change is termed “content-focused coaching.” This approach centers the coaching around one specific content area, with the intention of helping a teacher improve in that area, rather than working on all possible aspects of improving the craft of teaching. Gibbons and Cobb (2016) studied a mathematics teacher coaching middle school colleagues over a four-year period. The authors conducted a series of interviews with the teachers who worked with this coach, seeking feedback on effective coaching characteristics and practices.

Gibbons and Cobb (2016) concluded through this study that not only does a teacher need to be knowledgeable of the coached content area, but the coach also needs to employ strong coaching skills, with the ultimate goal of increasing teachers’ capacity, knowledge, and instructional skills. Although Gibbons and Cobb recommended further study for how these coaching practices impact teacher growth, the study demonstrated that an effective coach must bring a high level of expertise to the coaching relationship in order to empower teachers to apply highly specific content knowledge.

Instructional coaching in context. The instructional coaching approach incorporates specific skills and strategies while focusing on how the teacher implements this new knowledge in the classroom with the support of a coach. A coaching model

studied by Teemant (2014) began with an initial 30-hour university workshop and an intake interview to establish expectations, then cycled through seven individual coaching sessions, which had three components: a pre-conference to collaboratively plan the lesson, an observation during which the coach specifically looked for evidence of new strategies, and a post-conference for the coach and teacher to look at data and reflect on its implementation.

Results of this study showed that teachers appreciated the individualized support through coached conversations, valued that the coaching targeted student learning and success, and gladly acknowledged that meaningful reflection became a routine. Further benefits that teachers acknowledged were: heightened student engagement, a stronger sense of creativity with the curriculum, deeper questioning skills to prompt student thinking, and a more profound understanding of students' needs and abilities.

Teachers did admit that all of this instructional change did not come easily; making a significant change to teaching practices takes accountability, received through the coaching conversations. Teachers also recognized that school, district, and state mandates sometimes inhibited full engagement in the coaching and instructional model. One year after the study, however, coached teachers were still implementing the acquired practices, although not with the same depth or efficacy. Teemant (2014) recommended that the coaching process incorporate a second year in order to strengthen the learned practices long-term.

This approach to coaching shows that having a guide while learning new teaching practices can significantly impact teachers' self-efficacy and student engagement. In

stating that the coaching process should encompass a longer amount of time, Teemant (2014) acknowledged the fact that rapid change in practice does not equal long-term success. If teachers were capable of powerful instructional change through short-term coaching, the impact of longevity in a coaching relationship could have even deeper implications, which is at the core of every educator's hopes for how instruction affects students.

Summary of coaching models in education. Teacher preparation programs and professional development have not fully prepared teachers to apply the knowledge of content and pedagogy in actual instruction (August & Shanahan, 2006; Goker, 2006; Kraft et al., 2018). It is not enough to prepare teachers with just the knowledge needed about the content, teachers also need to put that knowledge into practice in a meaningful, accountable way (Goker, 2006). Coaching has been shown to enhance and deepen professional learning for teachers; several key models of coaching in education have been documented. Instructional coaching combines a coach's expert knowledge with co-constructed problem-solving between the coach and the partner teacher. Facilitative coaching is reflective in nature, where the coach encourages the partner teacher to dig internally into knowledge and experience to determine next steps for instruction. Directive coaching is when a coach gives explicit instruction and modeling in a focused topic or skill, and the partner teachers apply that within context. Effective coaching models that have been adopted by schools have included aspects of each of these models.

Coaching models and theories have often been recommended as a form of professional development. In order to promote effective teacher change toward growth in

instructional practices, with the ultimate goal of deeper student success, a professional development model should include coaching. It is difficult to define one specific model, for coaching is practiced within a context, for specific purposes, and will be unique to the situation (Bloom, Castagna, Moir, & Warren, 2005). Most literature reviews these models and theories and makes suggestions for effective use within educational contexts. There is not, however, a significant amount of evidence that proves coaching's effectiveness within education (Hammond & Moore, 2018), aside from case studies that target small groups of educators and students. More evidence is needed to show how proposed models of coaching impact teacher instructional growth and subsequent student achievement.

Reflective Practices in Education

Reflective practices encourage introspection and insight. There is a rising need for this in education, to promote and deepen professional learning. One-day workshops provide quality information, but may fall short of developing these skills in teachers' instructional practice. Milk et al. (1992) affirmed:

Staff development must involve more than addressing a discrete set of competencies. It means engaging teachers in a process wherein they see themselves as learners involved in discovering how their students learn and reflecting on how they can create optimal environments for all of their students in the classroom. (p. 12)

There is a distinction between reflective practice and reflexive practice.

Reflection is about looking back at one's actions and thinking about them, which can sometimes become like a checklist, rather than a useful tool for change; reflexivity means

to look back critically, to ensure that everything was done within instruction that could have been done, and, if there is room for improvement, to consider modifying instruction accordingly (Thompson & Pascal, 2012). For the purposes of this capstone, the term *reflective practice* is intended to encompass both reflection and reflexivity, that, at its core, maintaining a reflective practice as a teacher should include the ability to look back with a critical perspective in order to make a positive change toward furthering student success.

Liu and Milman (2010) examined current literature and asserted that teachers who work with diverse students need to be able to understand the cultures of the students in the classroom, as well as how to connect across cultures through relationships and instruction. A powerful way to do this involves reflective practices.

This section will begin with a brief overview of two pioneering practitioners in the field of reflective thinking, followed by current theories of reflective practice. Last, there is a review of how reflective practices manifest in specific contexts.

Dewey's theory of reflective thinking. John Dewey (1910) is generally cited as the founder of the reflective-thinking theory. His premise was that there is a constant need in reflective practices to balance unconscious actions and choices by making them conscious, that sometimes it is necessary to look at what has always been familiar in order to determine whether or not it is also effective. "The old, the near, the accustomed, is not that *to* which but that *with* which we attend; it does not furnish the material of a problem, but of its solution" (Dewey, 1910, p. 222). Familiar practices can be the source

of stability within new learning. In being reflective, a teacher uses both simultaneously to be grounded in successful instruction.

Schön's theory of reflective thinking. Donald Schön (1983) built on Dewey's principle of reflective thinking and applied it to professional contexts. He looked at the difference between reflecting in action (during the situation) and reflecting on action (analyzing the situation after it has occurred). He recommended that practitioners utilize both in building professional capacity in order to increase expertise.

Current theories of reflective practices in context. Over the course of time, reflective practitioners in the field of education borrowed concepts and ideas from Dewey and Schön and created personalized and contextualized models of reflective practices. In fact, this has been one point of contention around reflective practice: there are no agreed-upon guidelines on *how* to use reflective thinking, and, as such, there is not much research that supports its effectiveness in the pursuit of teacher change toward successful practices (Beauchamp, 2015). Reflective practices have been pursued with the purpose of building awareness and confidence in teaching practices. Farrell and Ives (2015) looked at the relationship of one language teacher's beliefs and practices, and the significance that engaging in reflective practice played. Through a case study, these researchers found that the teacher gained great confidence in examining his instructional practice through the reflective process. He became aware of how his instruction mirrored his own learning style, and he subsequently desired to make some of that learning more explicit with his students. The implications of this study are that looking inward and examining one's practice can lead a teacher to strengthened self-efficacy, and could initiate change as a

teacher becomes aware of discrepancies in current practice and student achievement. Furthermore, Hattie's Visible Learning (2019) showed in a meta-analysis of over 95,000 studies that reflection done collaboratively among teachers has the most significant impact on student achievement.

Reflective practice in pre-service teacher programs. Educator training programs intentionally employ reflection within coursework in order to build new teachers' sense of comfort in that chosen profession. Liu and Milton (2010) looked at how teacher candidates engaged in reflective practices in the context of an educational course and then applied reflection within teaching contexts. One of the teachers described her experience with reflection as examining her own assumptions about diverse cultures, and also shared her frustration in not knowing how to engage with those cultures, acknowledging that there were things that she did not know or understand about her students. She created a stance of open curiosity toward her students; she also instructed her students in incorporating reflection for themselves, in order to foster an open, welcoming learning environment. Another teacher gained further interest in how his own perspectives influenced his interactions with students from diverse backgrounds. In working with EL students, this teacher stated that reflective practices helped him to support the students in developing "dual cultural identities" (Liu & Milton, 2010, p. 626).

The majority of the literature in the last 20 years is focused on pre-service teachers (Strong-Wilson, 2006). Teaching reflective practices for new educators is pivotal in building self-efficacy. There is a need, however, to study the impact of reflection for

experienced teachers, whether the practices are pursued as an individual effort or within a coaching context.

Reflection for current teachers: A reflective practice in Chile. Some promising evidence for how reflection impacts experienced teachers comes from Chile. A national study in 2012 showed that Chile had “one of the highest income-related educational inequities,” meaning that high-achieving students come from high-income families (Grau, Calcagni, Preiss, & Oriz, 2017, p. 19). While progress in student achievement had been made in the previous two decades, in comparison to other countries that were also studied, Chilean students scored below average. Poor teacher preparatory education was seen largely to be at fault (Grau et al., 2017). The Chilean government responded with a mandated evaluation system for all teachers, and a significant number of teachers were rated as unsatisfactory (between 24%-40%, depending on the year). This information was not a catalyst for positive instructional change, nor did the teacher preparation programs or professional development offerings have any effect, however.

To address this issue, Grau et al. (2017) suggested developing partnerships between schools and universities in order to work toward acknowledging and using teachers’ expertise. This particular context focused on dialogue among participants to use experiential knowledge to understand and enhance new skills and knowledge. Reflective processing became a key component in this setting, with its ultimate purpose in moving from actual instruction toward improved practices. The study indicated that critical reflection should be an essential component of teacher development, and, when practiced in a collaborative environment, could have the additional benefit of initiating engaged

discussion around teaching practices. Teaching is an individual profession much of the working day and the need to take teachers beyond isolation into collaborative and constructive conversations is essential.

At its core, Grau et al.'s (2017) model incorporated “professional experience, reflection, and provision of suitable opportunities for learning” (pp. 24-25). In proposing this partnership between schools and universities in Chile, the authors sought to determine if there could be a change in both the person and instructional practice through reflection in learning communities. Results of this study showed that teachers applied new skills and knowledge, acknowledging that the trusted relationships built over time contributed greatly to instructional change. Teachers also began to sustain deeper empathy toward both colleagues and students, which brought about confident vulnerability and support of each other, and stronger engagement in learning for the students. Teachers recognized that a notable component of these changes was due to the reflective nature of the learning community. The researchers acknowledged that these changes could be momentary, but that this model is worth further exploration for its sustainability and impact on teacher instructional change.

Collaborative reflection: Reflective practices in Norway. Norwegian educational authorities supported research projects that both enhanced knowledge base and supported teachers in improving instructional practices. Postholm (2008) focused a study on various work methods that support students’ academic and social development. Over its two-year duration, the teachers and researcher consistently returned to the concept of reflection on teaching. Much of the work subsequently focused on this area of perceived need. After a

slow start that was hindered by complaints and unproductive discussions, the team entered into a cycle of observation and discussion. The cycle included observing each other in similar teaching roles, reflecting on the instruction and learning with those teachers, and coming together again as a larger group to deepen the reflective process. Throughout the course of the study, engaging in reflective practices led teachers to exchange ideas and tips from experience, which validated previously learned theories and strategies of teaching, incorporated reflection in planning and preparation work, and acknowledged the benefits of engaging in reflective (thinking) and development (acting) practices. Teachers gained confidence as competent professionals and acknowledged that, while the intention had been to work and learn collaboratively for many years, the structure and support of this project was needed to put it into effect. The majority of the conversations centered on lived-experience theories, or the actual daily instruction and its successive justification, rather than incorporating instructional theories and research-based practices. Posthom (2008) stated that while the tool of reflection could be useful in dissecting past actions to change future actions, stronger instructional practices could develop if reflective practices also included expert thinking outside of the school community.

Summary of reflective practices in education. While the literature reviewed in this chapter on reflective practices indicates positive results, reflective thinking has evolved over time in education, from a worthwhile undertaking to a seemingly obligatory practice. The practice of reflection has shifted from Dewey's description of it being a change catalyst to being a personally strengthening inward practice, with minimal change

involved. Finlayson (2015) conducted a study of those changes since the seminal work of Dewey in the early 20th century. Peck, Gallucci, Sloan, and Lippincott (as cited in Finlayson, 2015) described four movements through the evolution of reflective thinking: appropriation, transformation, publication, and conventionalization. Both sources suggested that reflective thinking has changed from being collective in nature (appropriation and transformation) to being an individual pursuit (publication and conventionalization). Reflection was extrospective, in that people observed others in order to legitimize or interpret internal behaviors. After the turn of the century, reflective thinking turned inward, going through phases of formal documentation of one's thinking into taking that new knowledge of self and sharing it with others (Finlayson, 2015).

Reflective thinking has turned into the ability to prove to others that one is a deep thinker, rather than a process to better one's actions and enhance the surrounding environment or culture. This shifts the motivation to engage in reflective thinking to receive recognition from others, rather than to engage in a change of behavior. Reflective thinking that is encouraged by another to incite change, whether a coach or a friend, may feel like drudgery, and not worthwhile to pursue. John Dewey (1910) stated,

Reflective thinking is always more or less troublesome because it involves overcoming the inertia that inclines one to accept suggestions at their face value; it involves willingness to endure a condition of mental unrest and disturbance. Reflective thinking, in short, means judgment suspended during further inquiry; and suspense is likely to be somewhat painful. . . . To maintain the state of doubt

and to carry on systematic and protracted inquiry these are the essentials of thinking. (p. 13)

There seems to be a need to return to some of the original intent behind reflective thinking, even through experiencing discomfort, in order to move toward positive behavioral adaptations. The literature of current reflective practices provides limited evidence of this phenomenon or its possible effectiveness in teacher growth and instructional change.

Rationale for this Capstone Project

Current practices of coaching in the context of the Twin Cities School District have led teachers to believe that the reflective coaching process is either an evaluative measure poorly disguised, or simply a hoop to jump through. There is minimal motivation to utilize coaching and reflection to enhance teaching practices. In developing this coaching framework for EL teachers to coach mainstream teachers in implementing academic-language development, the goal is that “Teachers learn from each other in the process of planning instruction, developing the materials to support it, watching each other work with students, and thinking together about the effect of their behavior on student learning” (Joyce & Showers, 2002, p. 95). Coaching is much more profound than simple observation and obligatory feedback, and can have a significant impact on student achievement through teachers’ growth in building capacity in professional repertoire.

Mainstream teachers must be fully prepared to move ELs across all proficiency levels toward grade-level success through classroom instruction, which needs to simultaneously include language development. Milk et al. (1992) recommended

necessary skills that all teachers should be proficient in, specifically for language development; and while the demographic, political, and programmatic climate is vastly different today than it was 27 years ago, much of what was researched then remains true today. Milk et al. proposed that all teachers working with students developing English have:

- knowledge of the various levels and kinds of language-specific instructions ELs receive;
- collaborative skills in working with language-development teachers (i.e. EL teachers or bilingual teachers);
- the ability to create a classroom environment that can promote a variety of learning strategies;
- knowledge of and the ability to apply language development learning opportunities, including dialogical interactions between teachers-students and students-students;
- knowledge of the difference in ELs' background knowledge and prior experience compared with mainstream peers;
- the ability to incorporate families of ELs into the classroom community and the students' learning;
- the confidence to appropriately apply language-development instruction that incorporates and provides opportunities for all four language domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing;
- the ability to include ELs in classroom discussion in meaningful ways;

- the ability to instruct ELs just above the students' current independent levels; and
- a celebratory attitude toward the diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds of the students in the class community. (pp. 6-7)

These may be lofty goals, no matter who the practitioner; a licensed and trained EL teacher will more easily fulfill these requisites for working with language learners because that teacher has developed the skills and knowledge to do so. Mainstream teachers' attention may be divided among countless needs and, with only minimal training in language development, these teachers may have barely scratched the surface of how to meet the needs of language learners in the classroom context. It is imperative that mainstream teachers receive strong, effective support in acquiring and implementing knowledge and skills in language development, in order to play a more significant role in empowering ELs in classroom communities.

Teachers of ELs are trained to provide quality, effective language instruction for language learners; as advocates for these students, part of an EL teacher's responsibility is to the mainstream teachers in the professional community. English-language teachers must be capable of supporting mainstream teachers in classroom practices in order to promote successful language acquisition for ELs throughout the entire school day (Milk et al., 1992). Coaching between a language teacher and a mainstream teacher supports the need for realistic, applicable, language-specific instructional change in the classroom while providing the accountability and scaffolding for the classroom teacher to incorporate new knowledge and skills (Milk et al., 1992). As teachers work on new learning and skills in an applicable structure, a key component in the coaching

environment should be a reflection on both the learned information and its implementation (Brown, 2016).

A coaching model that specifically addressed collaborative planning, observations, and feedback, adopted by Effective Practice schools in the Boston Public School District in the 2001-2002 school year provided participants with the ability to be “targeted, to define a focus of their learning and a strategy for getting there” (Neufeld & Roper, 2002, p. 12). The coaches worked in six-week cycles, and, while the teachers found this work to be challenging, the coaches acknowledged its direct correlation to positive instructional change. The teachers valued the reflection that connected to new learning. In line with this research, some aspects of the coaching framework for this capstone project include a proposed structure, some provide options, and portions of the curriculum are tailored to each coach’s respective site.

One of the most significant inhibitors for mainstream teachers implementing language development into content instruction, aside from the previously discussed lack of training, is the pressure that teachers feel to follow the district-aligned curriculum with fidelity, or to complete the lesson as it was intended (Korthagen, 2017), without deviating from the prescribed objectives that are often mandated by district faculty who may be far removed from the day-to-day of instruction. The problem with this is that while teachers may often acknowledge that lessons could be improved, there is a consistent fear of reproach for not following the rules of curriculum and standardized instruction. Even though teachers were hired as experts with professional decision-making skills, this paralysis may prevent teachers from using a heart knowledge of teaching, including

implementing newly learned strategies and information. A coaching relationship could support teachers in applying new learning around language development and reflecting on its challenges and effectiveness. Walsh and Mann (2015) have advocated:

Developing experiential knowledge is best supported by collaborative discussion where thoughts and ideas about classroom practice are first articulated and then reformulated in a progression towards enhanced understanding. In this approach, reflection on practice does not occur in isolation, but in discussion with another practitioner. (p. 356)

English learners need specific, scaffolded instruction to be successful, particularly in mainstream settings. August (2018) provided direction in effective ways to do that, including access to grade-level content through EL-specific support and developing academic language, and a cultivated community that embraces the assets of language and culture as well as encourages peer-to-peer interaction. The mainstream teachers in the district this capstone project is intended for could benefit greatly from a reflective coaching model that includes these recommendations. Brown (2016) acknowledged that one of the most significant challenges in professional development is not in its learning, but in its application in the classroom. The accountability provided by a coach could be effective in helping teachers implement new skills and work toward instructional success using new strategies.

Summary

The purpose of this literature review was to seek answers to the question: *What coaching practices and materials will effectively support mainstream teachers in*

implementing academic-language development for English learners? This chapter covered language-development needs and deficits in mainstream teachers' training and beliefs. Coaching models were presented and discussed. And finally, reflective practices within education were reviewed.

Throughout this literature, several key findings emerged. Language development is a challenging process to participate in as a learner and equally as an educator working toward providing research-based, effective, language-specific instruction. English learners are expected to succeed in mainstream classes, and there is evidence that mainstream teachers have not received enough specialized instruction in how to integrate content knowledge and academic language learning. Engaging in an instructional coaching model that includes a knowledgeable expert in a focused field and empowers mainstream teachers to be reflective practitioners has the potential to provide stronger language-specific instruction with an ultimate goal to increase EL grade-level achievement.

The upcoming chapter will describe the capstone project and its development. It will relate research from this chapter to designing the coaching framework and all subsequent materials. Chapter three will include a description of the context and intended audience, as well as describe the process of project completion and implementation. The chapter will also provide a foundation in learning paradigms and a rationale for the choices made for the coaching model and developed materials.

CHAPTER THREE

Project Description

Introduction

Educators continually strive to ensure that students receive quality, effective instruction within an increasingly challenging classroom environment. As student needs diversify, so does the demand for teachers' skills and qualifications to reach those needs. Professional development is highly sought-after, and with each new workshop or training, teachers continue the uphill battle of feeling equipped to provide instruction for each and every student. Often, ELs are the students whose needs are most misunderstood, and instruction in mainstream classrooms is confined by the teachers' knowledge of differentiation for other learning needs. Many mainstream teachers acknowledge having limited capacity to work with this student population, but still seek to understand language-acquisition and language-development strategies. This capstone project provides an effective structure with which to support mainstream teachers in acquiring language-acquisition knowledge and instructional strategies by answering the question: *What coaching practices and materials will effectively support mainstream teachers in implementing academic-language development for English learners?* Currently, the structures in place to address this need are minimal or not specific to the context for which this project is intended.

This chapter will first present the need for this research-based coaching framework, and then describe the coaching framework, including the context and audience for which it is intended. A thorough description of the components of the coaching cycle will be provided, along with the learning paradigm and a researched rationale that supports this design. Finally, a summary will conclude the information from this chapter.

Need for this Project

One of the ways the Twin Cities School District seeks to equip and support mainstream teachers in building capacity to work more effectively with ELs is through a partnership with Hamline University's English Learners in the Mainstream (ELM) Project. The premise of the ELM Project is to train EL teachers to provide quality language-focused professional development for mainstream colleagues, and for these EL teachers to engage as coaches with the mainstream teachers to support language-development implementation. The ELM-trained EL teachers are referred to as ELM Coaches. Currently, there are 11 trained ELM Coaches in elementary, middle, and high school. Moving into the third year of ELM coaching in the district, approximately 70 mainstream teachers have partnered with trained EL teachers to receive professional development and coaching in embedding language development with content instruction. In reflecting with both ELM Coaches and coached teachers, the informal feedback was highly positive about the professional-development information and delivery. Teachers were grateful for the knowledge, but have hesitated in fully implementing language development. The coaching side of this partnership was identified as the weak

component, and the ELM Coaches expressed a need for further structure, training, and resources to more effectively support the mainstream teachers in language-development implementation.

One of the limitations of the coaching training through the ELM Project is the depth and breadth of the coaching training, including guidance on how to structure and implement effective coaching. The ELM Project provides coaching theories and models, based in Knight's (2009) instructional coaching and Aguilar's (2013) transformational coaching. While there is a plethora of information from these two resources for *why* these coaching approaches are effective, the ELM Coaches in this district feel a strong need to understand *how* to implement effective coaching with mainstream colleagues. The focus of this capstone project was to design a coaching framework with a structure and supplemental materials to fill this need. While researching and designing this framework, discussions were held with the facilitators of the ELM Project at Hamline University, who acknowledged this same gap in the training, along with a subsequent pursuit of providing further resources and professional development for implementing quality and effective coaching practices. It is the intent of this capstone project to continue to partner with the ELM Project, and to provide another source of support for ELM Coaches in the future.

Project Description

Project overview. This coaching framework was developed for EL teachers who are ELM Coaches supporting mainstream teachers in implementing academic-language opportunities for ELs in classroom instruction. This framework used the concepts of

Hamline University's ELM Project, but furthered the work by focusing specifically on district needs and personnel and addressing areas of weakness in the current coaching structure. This framework includes an overall structure with three phases, all of which will be thoroughly described in this chapter, and a guide that includes supplemental materials and resources for the coaches to use for implementing each phase.

Context. This coaching framework is intended to impact a suburban district in Minnesota with a little more than 7,500 total enrolled K-12 students. Thirty-one percent of students are exposed to languages other than English at home, the most prevalent being Spanish, Karen, and Hmong; approximately 1,100 currently qualify to receive EL services, and, with others who have recently exited and are being monitored for success in the mainstream, comprise more than 14% of the total student population. The community within the district borders includes refugee-status groups and other various ethnic communities, university housing for international students and adjunct faculty, and low-high economic status families. While 65% of the teachers hold a master's degree or higher, and the majority of the teachers in the district are excellent educators, there is a limited number of mainstream teachers who would claim sufficient training in working with EL students. Many of the district's mainstream teachers have expressed a desire for quality, applicable professional development and implementation support in providing effective language-development instruction for language learners.

Audience. The coaching program is intended for: (a) ELM-trained Coaches to use in implementing effective coaching structures in the school context; and (b) mainstream

teachers who voluntarily partner with the coaches and participate in the coaching program.

Of the 11 trained ELM Coaches in the district, eight teach at the elementary level, two at the middle school level, and one at the high school level. Each site operates uniquely, and therefore, each Coach implements coaching and professional development according to the site context. The intention of this coaching framework is to provide a common structure and resources for these Coaches to collaborate with and support each other.

The mainstream teachers who partner with the Coaches elect to participate in this form of professional development. The intention of this framework for mainstream teachers is to provide an effective and efficient structure for participation in coaching throughout the year.

The coaching framework. The coaching framework is comprised of two components that incorporate research-based practices for language development, coaching, and reflection:

- 1) The overarching structure for implementation, which has three distinct phases that span the course of the school year: the launch phase, the coaching cycle, and the culmination phase;
- 2) The guide, which is a consumable resource to support ELM Coaches in implementing the coaching model.

The launch phase. The purpose of this first phase of the coaching framework is to provide time for the Coach and mainstream teacher to establish rapport and build a

mutual relationship, and for each to become familiar with the expectations and direction for the year. During this phase, the Coach conducts an initial observation of a lesson in the mainstream classroom using the ELM Support Tool, a resource developed by the Hamline Project facilitators to measure language-development instruction and practices (see Appendix B). Then the Coach and mainstream teacher engage in a brief reflective conversation, specific to academic-language development.

All of the teachers with whom the Coach is working form a cohort, and together participate in an initial professional development session focused on essential background information about language acquisition, characteristics of, and issues impacting, language learners, and a description of the upcoming coaching-cycle process. As part of this first professional development session, mainstream teachers tentatively establish routine one-on-one meetings with the Coach. This initial phase, including the first observations and the first professional development session, takes approximately four to six weeks at the beginning of the school year, depending on the number of mainstream partner teachers (recommended three to five) with whom the ELM Coach is working.

The coaching cycle. The purpose of this second phase of the coaching framework is to provide focused instruction and training in one area of language development, including strategies for language production opportunities in the classroom, and for the mainstream teacher to engage in a coached implementation of this focus area. At the beginning of each six- to eight-week cycle (recommendation of three cycles total during the school year), the cohort meets together for a language-development-focused training delivered by the ELM Coach. This training is 30 to 60 minutes, either during the duty day

(before or after students arrive) or outside of the duty hours, and mainstream teachers may submit a timecard for compensation through the EL department. During this training, teachers engage with a self-evaluative reflective tool to indicate initial confidence in the focused language-development topic and strategy.

Within two weeks of the professional development session, the Coach meets with each teacher individually to begin the process of implementation. This first meeting includes clarification of the focused topic, goal-setting for how the teacher intends to apply that language development to content instruction, and a determination of the level of support the teacher prefers in implementation, such as co-teaching, modeling by the ELM Coach, observation during implementation, or other support that the Coach and mainstream teacher discuss together. The teacher then implements the language-development strategy with the chosen level of support. After implementation, the Coach and mainstream teacher meet to reflect on successes and challenges, and engage in conversation about how to continue implementation.

Over the course of the subsequent weeks, the Coach and mainstream teacher may continue to engage in supported implementation with reflective conversations, or set up routine check-ins to discuss the effectiveness of implementation and any further refinements. During the implementation process and reflective conversations, teachers engage with the same self-evaluation tool used at the beginning of the cycle to monitor growth toward mastery of the focused language strategy.

Once all teachers in the cohort have engaged in this coaching cycle for the focused topic, a new cycle begins with a different language-development topic. Part of

the professional development for the next cycle includes a reflective conversation for the whole cohort to share insights on the previous topic.

The culmination phase. The purpose for this final phase of the coaching framework is for teachers to engage in a reflective process about the impact of language development in instruction and EL student achievement. The Coach will observe the mainstream teacher a final time using the ELM Support Tool as a measure of growth from the beginning of the year. After this observation, the mainstream teacher self-reflects on growth and learning, and the cohort meets together to share guided reflection, as well as to look toward the next school year and process any instructional changes for continued development.

The coaching guide. The second component of the framework is the consumable resource for the ELM Coaches and mainstream teachers. The ELM Coaching Guide for the Twin Cities School District includes materials for support and guidance in implementing the cycle. Professional development materials include suggested agenda items for each type of professional development session during the cycle; links to presentations, handouts, and ideas; language-development focus resources; and reflective prompts for the discussion portion. Suggested scripts for the various one-on-one meetings are provided for the Coach to use when interacting with the mainstream teacher, along with organized note-taking for each teacher. Materials for the mainstream teachers include an overview of the coaching framework and a Language-Development Cycle Guide. Each of these supplemental materials were carefully designed and aligned with

research based in the fields of language development, coaching models, and reflective practices.

Learning paradigms. The instruction within this coaching framework is based on the sociocultural theory of learning, first theorized by Vygotsky (1934). At its core, the sociocultural theory is founded on the idea that learning takes place within the context of community, rather than on an individual basis. Learning is influenced by one's culture and the people with whom one interacts during the process of acquiring knowledge and skills. Two of the major premises of the theory are around language processing and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The ZPD is significant in that it seeks to explain how cognitive abilities are layered upon each other, building from where a learner is currently, toward the next-higher-level cognitive skill. While Vygotsky intended his developmental learning theory to focus on childhood development, many aspects of this theory apply to adult learners. Teachers have great capacity for acquiring new skills and knowledge, but current learning and implementation must be mastered before moving on to unfamiliar skills and knowledge. Many mainstream teachers are experts in the field of education—experts at delivering instruction, experts at integrating new district initiatives, experts at classroom management, etc. In the case of differentiating instruction and applying language development for ELs, many teachers have the foundational knowledge on which to build new skills and knowledge; these teachers simply need the training and support to be able to effectively implement them.

A second learning theory upon which this coaching framework is based is Mezirow's (2000) transformation learning, which is specifically focused on adults.

“Learning occurs in one of four ways: by elaborating existing frames of reference, by learning new frames of reference, by transforming points of view, or by transforming habits of mind” (Mezirow, 2000, p. 19). This theory is grounded in the need for critical reflection on one’s assumptions and beliefs, along with the presumed cultural assumptions and beliefs, in order to transform current practices into improved practices. The intent for this coaching framework is for mainstream teachers to examine internal beliefs about ELs’ learning and success in the classroom, to juxtapose it with new understandings and perspectives from language-specific professional development, and to apply potential new beliefs, skills, and knowledge to interactions with, and instruction for, EL students.

Rationale for this framework’s design. Instructional coaching (Knight, 2009) is designed to support teachers in implementing research-based instructional practices through an intentional and intensive coaching relationship. This partnership is intended to be between two mutually-respected teaching professionals, one of whom provides expertise in an area that the other is lacking. In the case of this capstone project, the partners are a mainstream teacher seeking to gain knowledge of and effective instructional practices for language development, and an EL teacher who brings language training and experience in language acquisition instruction to the coaching relationship. Several key features of Knight’s (2009) instructional coaching design included mutual determination of instructional goals, observations, modeling, feedback, reflection, dialogue, and refinement of implementation. Each of the features within the coaching framework fit within these recommendations.

Another significant coaching model that impacted the design of this coaching framework was the cycle proposed by Brown (2016), which incorporated professional development, instructional implementation, and coaching. Coaching within a cyclical model provided the opportunity for participants to focus narrowly on one topic, practice instructional strategies around that topic, and gain mastery and confidence in a newly acquired skill without being inundated with too much information before moving on to other learning.

The content of the coaching is focused on research-based instructional design for language development. Brisk (2015) recommended providing language instruction through a genre-specific lens, because language is not used in isolation but for a specific purpose within a context. For example, the academic language needed to write a report about volcanic activity is vastly different than the academic language needed to write a personal narrative. The coaching cycle and implementation process is based on this theory of effective language acquisition. Along with genre-based instruction is the ability to develop academic language within the context of the content, which Zwiers (2014) advocated for as necessary for EL success in the mainstream classroom.

Reflection is an important component of any coaching model to determine the effectiveness toward the intended outcome. While reflection is often included in the coaching process, it has also been shown to be an effective strategy for teacher belief, attitude, and instructional change when done as a separate practice. This proposed coaching framework includes a strong focus on reflective practices. The reflective practices studied by Grau et al. (2017) in Chile provided significant insight into how

reflection can affect positive change in adopting new skills and deepening empathy toward colleagues and diverse student populations. Reflection as an isolated activity does not fully serve its intended purpose. Within the context of this coaching framework, reflective practices, for both individuals and cohorts, could provide the long-term changes that mainstream teachers will need to sustain in order to work more effectively with EL populations.

Timeline. The design of this framework directly stems from both the literature reviewed and the specific needs voiced within the context for which it was designed. The process included research, material creation, and feedback over the course of several months.

The first month focused on drafting the framework and specific conversations with other ELM Coaches about the coaching framework. A draft of a visual representation of the coaching framework was discussed with the other ELM Coaches, along with a description of the framework to elicit feedback about the design and structure. Feedback was provided through answers to survey questions and was used to refine the graphic, determine the language-development strategies that are essential topics for the coaching-cycle phase, and to plan for materials to include in the guide. Those discussions led to further research on effective instructional practices around the recommended language-development strategies.

The second month of the development process focused on drafting the supplemental materials that are included in the Coaching Guide for both the coaching process and for the language-development strategies. After the materials were created,

further feedback was elicited from the ELM Coaches on how the materials could be used, what challenges were seen in implementing the cycle with the proposed materials, and what further resources and materials could be beneficial. Additional resources and ideas were added to the ELM Coaching Guide. During this stage of the process, the layout, organization, and design of all of the components of the framework were also drafted.

Finally, the third month focused on finalizing the framework and all supplemental materials. Continued conversations with the ELM Coaches provided further revisions and adaptations. The ELM Coaching Guide was formatted as a professional tool that could be accessed digitally or printed as a physical resource.

Summary

The purpose of chapter three was to describe the project stemming from the question: *What coaching practices and materials will effectively support mainstream teachers in implementing academic-language development for English learners?* The chapter described the coaching framework that was developed for this capstone project, including information about the context and audience for which it is intended, as well as provided a rationale for designing a framework that included academic-language development, coaching relationships, and reflective practices.

The upcoming and final chapter of this capstone will make connections between these three pieces through reviewing pertinent literature, describing the project, and recognizing areas of impact in learning throughout the process. Implications of the coaching framework for the district will be addressed, as well as how the ELM Coaches intend to implement it systematically. Limitations of the framework will be discussed,

along with recommendations for how to consider those limitations moving forward. An evaluation process for its success will be described, and a structure for refining the framework will be proposed as it is implemented.

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusion

Introduction

As teaching demands increase, particularly for meeting the differentiated needs of all students in mainstream classrooms, so does the demand for increased and sustainable professional development to meet those needs. From 2000 to 2016, the number of English learners enrolled in public schools increased from 3.8 million to 4.9 million, almost 10% of the total student population, which has subsequently increased the number of ELs in mainstream classrooms (NCES, 2019). English learners are significantly affected by strengthened professional practices, and there is a poignant need for teachers to work effectively with language development for the success of linguistically diverse students. This capstone project pursues a solution to this need by addressing the question, *What coaching practices and materials will effectively support mainstream teachers in implementing academic-language development for English learners?* Through pursuing answers to this question, this capstone presents a research-based coaching framework for the Coaches in the Twin Cities School District to implement in supporting mainstream colleagues.

This chapter begins with a reflection on the process of researching and designing this capstone project, followed by a summarized description of the coaching framework.

The next section is a review of the literature that influenced the coaching framework's design. The benefits, implications, and limitations of this project are discussed.

Recommendations for communication, future use, and further research are addressed, and the chapter concludes with a final summary of the capstone and its development process.

Reflection on the Capstone Process

Over the course of my experience as an English-language teacher, I have learned firsthand how challenging the process of both learning and teaching the language can be. As I have increased my capacity to provide meaningful, authentic language instruction, I have also seen the minimal language-specific preparation that mainstream teacher education programs provide for K-12 teachers. Two years ago, I had the opportunity to begin a partnership with the English Learners in the Mainstream (ELM) Project at Hamline University, which seeks to more fully equip mainstream teachers with academic English-language-development skills through a coaching relationship with an English-language teacher. I believe this work to be vital within current school systems, with benefits for mainstream teachers in learning and providing quality language and content instruction, for EL teachers in shifting perspective on the leadership and educational assets they bring, and for English learners in acknowledging their multi-lingual, multi-cultural backgrounds and, ultimately, in realizing their academic success as they increase their English proficiency.

As the facilitator of the ELM Coach network for the district, I have seen the program's potential to fulfill these benefits. In reality, however, the Coaches have articulated the challenge of coaching their mainstream colleagues well. The training

provided through Hamline's ELM Project is a starting point, but the ELM Coaches in the district perceived a need for greater structure, for common resources and tools, and for recommendations and ideas on how to best coach the mainstream teachers in order to incite significant and sustainable change in instructional practices for English-learner language development.

This capstone project stemmed from this expressed need, and, subsequently, the coaching framework organizes the year in a specific, recommended structure, provides research-based coaching guidelines, and compiles resources, materials, and potential scripts to use throughout the process of coaching.

The design of these materials took shape from two significant sources: research in the areas of language development, coaching models, and reflective practices; and the on-going feedback and insights of the ELM Coaches. Throughout the research process, I was struck by the quantity of content for each of the major themes of the project, yet, at the same time, by the lack of evidence provided for the effectiveness of coaching models and reflective practices. Most of the literature included recommendations from experts about how to go about these processes, with minimal information regarding effective implementation. As a researcher, I had hoped to review both types of literature—to understand the information available and to digest the quality of those structures within specific contexts. I have learned that, while there are a plethora of ideas available, there is a continued need for evidence-based practices that effectively and contextually apply those ideas. As a designer of a framework based on these ideas, I will contribute to that area by examining and evaluating the framework's effectiveness to support significant

and sustainable change in mainstream teachers' instructional practices for English learners. As a writer, I have been challenged by the immensity of synthesizing all the information for this literature review and determining which aspects of language development, coaching models, and reflective practices should be incorporated into the design of the coaching framework. I have greatly relied upon the feedback of the ELM Coaches and experts in the field of language development to design this framework to be successful in the district.

The Coaching Framework

The culminating project for this capstone includes research-based language-development strategies, a cyclical instructional coaching model, and reflective practices. There are three phases to the coaching framework: the launch phase, the coaching cycle, and the culmination phase. The framework also provides supplemental guidance materials for the ELM Coaches to support each phase, titled ELM Coaching Guide for Twin Cities School District.

In the launch phase, the ELM Coach observes the mainstream teacher using the ELM Support Tool, with a follow-up conversation about impressions from the observation and a discussion of targeted learning for the year. The cohort of mainstream teachers then meets with the ELM Coach for an initial professional-development session, which covers background information on English learners and second-language acquisition.

The coaching cycle is the second phase. Mainstream teachers and the ELM Coach engage in an iterative cycle that includes:

1. Meeting as a cohort of mainstream teachers with focused professional development on one topic, self-evaluation of knowledge of and confidence in teaching a specific language-development strategy, and a goal-setting discussion within that topic;
2. One-on-one conversation between the coach and the mainstream teacher to solidify the teacher's language-development goal around the professional-development topic;
3. Implementation of the language-development goal with support from the coach, including observations, pre-determined and routine co-planning time, potential co-teaching, and/or modeling of the strategy and reflective conversations (repeating this process as necessary for the mainstream teacher to confidently and independently incorporate the newly learned skill);
4. Continued self-assessment using the same evaluative tool that the teacher used during the beginning-of-cycle professional development;
5. Meeting with the mainstream cohort to reflect collaboratively on the current topic before moving into a new cycle focused on a new topic.

The culminating phase of the framework provides a space for reflection and identifying future areas of growth. This phase includes a final observation, during which the ELM Coach uses the ELM Support Tool a second time to measure growth in language-development instructional practices, an individual reflection on the year's learning and growth, and a concluding cohort reflective conversation.

The ELM Coaching Guide for the Twin Cities School District consists of a variety of resources for both the Coach and the mainstream teacher. The Coach is provided with information for delivering professional development, including suggested agenda items, possible scripting, and links to potential materials to use in delivering the content. As the Coach meets with the teacher throughout the year's cycles, there is guidance for meetings, reflective question ideas, and planning documents for collaboration. There are also resources for the mainstream teacher for participation throughout the coaching process, including an overview of the year and a cycle guide.

Review of Literature that Influenced this Project

Language development. The process of developing a new language is similar to the process of developing a first-learned language. Research over the last few decades has shown that language learned and developed within context maintains more authenticity, automaticity, and sustainability than learning a language by rote memorization. Halliday (2007) developed the theory of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), which is grounded in the premise that language choices are made for a specific purpose, and therefore, must be learned within the context of that purpose. Language must be learned through making connections to how it functions within a context.

Brisk (2015) expanded upon SFL theory to bridge language learning within context to connect with the rigorous Common Core State Standards (CCSS) that students are expected to master at each grade level. Daily academic language choices are made by native English speakers, and most often, those choices are made unconsciously, through learned linguistic behaviors over time. Those language choices need to be made explicit

for language learners through language development instruction connected to content, within a context similar to first-language acquisition. Additionally, language learners need access to multiple daily opportunities to interact with all four domains of language—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—with an emphasis on the productive language skills of speaking and writing, to master those academic-language choices within the context for which they were intended. Brisk advised breaking down academic language by genre, such as narrative, informational report, and opinion, and explicitly teaching the grade-appropriate academic-language choices necessary for a student to be successful according to the expected standards.

In order for content to be accessible for students, Zweirs (2014) recommended that those academic-language choices should be taught explicitly, modeled with purpose, and practiced daily within content instruction. English learners need content instruction to be scaffolded at their proficiency level, with specific language-development opportunities incorporated into each content lesson.

A disconnect exists, unfortunately, in the need for this type of explicit language instruction, and in mainstream teachers' training and experience to deliver that instruction. Milk et al. (1992) stated, "it appears likely that a significant gap may exist between prevalent conceptions of effective instructional strategies for language minority children and actual practice" (p. 6). Even teachers who are trained in English-language development find explicit language instruction challenging; mainstream teachers work with a variety of needs in the classroom and feel the need for further training,

development, and support in providing language-specific instruction for their English learners.

The coaching framework designed for this capstone project is based on the content of language development. Mainstream teachers have effective differentiation tools for instructing students in the classroom; often, however, language development is combined with reading instruction, and these two skills are in fact distinct from one another. The ELM Coaching Guide seeks to provide ELM Coaches with academic-language-specific development tools to support the success of English learners.

Coaching models in education. The practice of engaging teachers with expert coaches is not new to education. Coaching has sometimes been seen, however, as another form of negative evaluation, rather than as support for teachers learning and mastering effective instructional skills and strategies. Knight (2011) developed a partnership approach to coaching, termed *instructional coaching*. Within this model, the coach and the mainstream teacher engage as equals, bringing different expertise to the relationship. A common goal is established, with a specific skill or strategy in mind, and the coach works with the partner teacher through the implementation process, which could include professional development, instructional support, and reflective discussion.

An important aspect of a coaching model, according to Brown (2016), is its iterative nature. Brown recommended that coaching is most effective when pursued within a cycle with a narrow focus and abundant time to practice, gain confidence, and attain mastery before moving to another new skill.

This capstone project is designed with both Knight's (2011) and Brown's (2016) recommendations in mind. The coaching framework is based upon a strong, equal partnership between the ELM Coach and the mainstream teacher, and follows a cyclical process to develop the skills of language-development instruction.

Reflective practices in education. Original theories of reflective thinking came from Dewey's (1910) work: thinking reflectively about actions can lead a person to determine whether those actions need transformation, fortification, or dismissal. Reflection is meant to be a worthwhile undertaking to maintain a growth mindset. Grau et al. (2017) conducted a study in Chile that exhibited a positive and sustained change in instructional practices when teachers engaged in reflective thinking. Teachers in this study engaged as a learning community focused on pedagogical reflection, in order to improve isolated teachers' instruction through discussion, collaboration, and mutual development of effective practices.

Reflection is often a key piece of coaching models; in designing this coaching framework, however, a strong emphasis was placed on incorporating individual, partner, and group reflective processes. The purpose of the coaching framework is to support teachers in instructional and belief change for English learners; engaging in deep reflective thinking through the process is integral for authentic and sustained change.

Implications of Project

Implications for stakeholders. A variety of stakeholders are affected by this capstone project. The coaching framework is intended to support ELM Coaches who are

working with mainstream teachers, who in turn work with English learners in content instruction.

Benefits for ELM Coaches. A significant challenge of the current ELM coaching program within the district for which this project is intended is that, while there is a strong structure, there is not enough depth or guidance for how the coaches should interact with mainstream colleagues. This coaching framework was designed specifically to address this challenge and will provide ELM Coaches with a research-based coaching structure, language-development resources, and reflective-practice guidance to implement at specific school sites. This framework provides a common program to work within, which subsequently creates a collaborative foundation for the various ELM Coaches to come together to share resources, ideas, and strategies for coaching their colleagues.

Benefits for mainstream teachers. Mainstream teachers are experts in the field of education; differentiation, scaffolding, and focused instruction are familiar and comfortable instructional concepts. Many mainstream teachers, however, may feel that providing explicit language-development opportunities within content instruction is challenging. The ELM Project, through Hamline University, partners EL teachers trained as ELM Coaches with mainstream teachers to support this integration of academic language and content instruction. The ELM Coaching Guide developed as part of the coaching framework for this capstone project enhances the coaching partnership by providing the ELM Coaches with specific coaching guidance within a cyclical model. This model provides mainstream teachers the ability to focus on mastering individual and

important language-development strategies through professional development, coaching support for implementation, and reflective practices in order to improve instructional practices for English learners.

Benefits for English learners. English learners require access to language development, as well as access to content instruction. English-Language Development programs provide targeted language services, which are beneficial for ELs, but may not be enough to move them effectively toward English proficiency or to provide instruction that is meaningfully connected to the content. This coaching framework ultimately benefits English learners through the coaching partnership, because ELs will have more opportunities to practice academic language within the context of content instruction, supporting mastery of both language and content.

Professional implications. This project impacts both teachers who are currently licensed to teach English-language development and mainstream teachers working with English learners.

Benefits within the field of English-language development. Teachers of the English language are a highly-skilled, incredibly adaptable group of expert educators. These teachers' strengths may be overlooked by their administrations, colleagues, and even students. In positioning ELM-trained EL teachers as coaches with mainstream colleagues, EL teachers step into a leadership role that has, more often than not, been withheld. English-language teachers have sometimes been overlooked and underused, and as EL teachers take on this educational leadership, these teachers will more often be seen as the significant asset they are within a school context.

Additionally, all educators should possess academic-language development skills, because all of the learners in content instruction are exposed to new academic language on a daily basis. The instruction that is effective for language learners—building background, vocabulary within context, differentiation, peer interaction, productive language opportunities—is effective for all students, whether struggling or gifted. As more mainstream teachers implement language development within content instruction, English learning will become more of an asset than a deficit in the classroom community.

Policy implications. Laws, mandates, and rulings concerning access to core content instruction for language learners have been implemented and refined over the last 50 years, starting with the May 25 Memorandum in 1970 (Office for Civil Rights, 1970), which stated that the Local Education Agency (LEA) must provide support for students who speak a language other than English to be able to access instruction. Later, in the case of *Lau v. Nichols* (1974), the Supreme Court ruled that the LEA must take steps to remove educational barriers for all students, regardless of any native languages.

Currently, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (2015), mandates that LEAs provide language learners with access to language instruction that will move them effectively toward English proficiency, *and* that language learners have access to the same rigorous standards and instruction as native-English-speaking peers.

In the state of Minnesota, all licensed teachers must be prepared to describe differentiated instructional practices for English learners. Many teachers may rely on the knowledge of effective practices for differentiation, but not on language-specific development strategies. The partnership of this coaching project goes above and beyond

the current requirements for relicensure. The purpose of this coaching framework is to equip mainstream teachers to integrate academic-language development and content instruction so that these policy mandates are effectively and sustainably met within a supported, guided relationship with a language instruction expert.

Potential district implications. While the design of this coaching framework was intended specifically for the ELM Coaches within the district, it is a model of embedded professional development that has the potential to be customized to meet the needs of other aspects of education. Language development could be interchanged with another perceived growth area, and the instructional coaching and reflective-thinking practices recommended for this framework could be applied as the structure for delivering professional development. As this model could have a significant impact on the academic achievement for English learners, it is worthwhile to pursue its sustainability within the district. The research and design of this capstone project will therefore be shared with district leadership with the intention of providing a possible systems change in how professional development is delivered in the future.

Limitations of Project

The coaching framework written for this capstone project is intended for the specific needs of the Twin Cities School District. As it was developed for this particular context, all of its components may not be suitable for other school situations. However, the framework may be adapted accordingly within another coaching program, as it is intended to be a source of language-development support, regardless of the context.

Over the course of reviewing the research for both coaching and reflective practices, much of the literature contains recommendations for effective programs, but there is minimal evidence of the actual effectiveness of those programs. Much of what this capstone project is based upon are recommendations by experts in the fields of coaching (Aguilar, 2013; Brown, 2016; Knight, 2009) and reflection (Dewey, 1910; Grau et al., 2017) within education. More research needs to be done, however, to determine whether these practices positively influence instructional change and student academic achievement.

A further limitation is that the structure of this coaching framework and the ELM Coaching Guide designed for its implementation are based on current research. As thinking evolves and more research is done in the fields of language development, coaching, and reflective practices, the content and structure of this coaching framework will need to be evaluated and revised accordingly to align with current research-based practices.

Recommendations for Communication, Future Use, and Further Research

Communication of the coaching framework. The ELM Coaches who will use this coaching framework have been an integral part of its design. These Coaches articulated the challenges to the current coaching structure upon which the research question was based, as well as provided feedback on the structure and materials throughout the framework's design. Upon its completion, the framework and ELM Coaching Guide will be presented to the ELM Coaching team in the Twin Cities School District, along with its research base and rationale for its design. Once the Coaches have

provided further feedback, the coaching framework and ELM Coaching Guide will be shared with the facilitators of the ELM Project at Hamline University, to be used as a potential resource for those participating in the ELM Coaching Project in other schools and districts.

Future use of the coaching framework. This coaching framework is intended to be a dynamic resource that adapts to needs, ideas, realistic implementation, and current research. Once the framework and guide are presented to the ELM Coaches in the Twin Cities School District, any feedback provided will be used to refine the materials. During the spring of 2020, ELM Coaches will work to pilot implementation of some of its components. At the end of the 2019-2020 school year, the ELM Coaches will determine next steps in order to fully implement the framework at each site for the 2020-2021 school year. Resources, materials, and tools will be added to the ELM Coaching Guide as the ELM Coaches collaborate on effective coaching implementation and current research will be considered and applied accordingly to the coaching framework.

Further research. The next step after full implementation will be to measure the effectiveness of the coaching framework. The ELM Coach Team will develop an evaluative tool, based on objectives determined at the outset of 2020-2021, which focus on the effectiveness of: a) the structure and materials to support instructional change for mainstream teachers and b) the support provided for English learners as they make progress toward English proficiency. Additionally, further research is needed to study the effectiveness of the instructional coaching and reflective practices that this coaching framework recommends, especially in other contexts and for other purposes.

Summary

Successful language learning and effective language instruction are challenging, yet attainable. The purpose of this capstone project was to address the needs of language development in the mainstream classroom by seeking answers to the question: *What coaching practices and materials will effectively support mainstream teachers in implementing academic-language development for English learners?* The subsequent project incorporated research-based models and authentic feedback from stakeholders.

This concluding chapter presented a summary of the work done within the capstone process, as well as addressed the project's potential future significance. The researcher provided reflections on the capstone writing process, a description of the coaching framework, and a review of influencing literature for the project's design. Implications for how the project may be used, limitations of its scope, and recommendations for further work were addressed.

It is the hope that this coaching framework will be directly applicable to coaching relationships within the Twin Cities School District, but also that it may be used by any EL teacher seeking to empower mainstream colleagues to more effectively provide language-development instruction to English learners. Language learners need integrated support of language and content; teachers working with ELs need deeper knowledge and instructional strategies to be able to provide academic-language-rich learning environments. This coaching framework is intended to support ELM Coaches with the structure, materials, and collaboration necessary to equip mainstream colleagues in

providing academic-language instruction, which, in turn, will empower English learners to simultaneously achieve English proficiency and content mastery.

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Appendix A

Proficiency levels chart

4



Performance Definitions for the Levels of English Language Proficiency in Grades K-12

At the given level of English language proficiency, English language learners will process, understand, produce, or use:

6 Reaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> specialized or technical language reflective of the content areas at grade level a variety of sentence lengths of varying linguistic complexity in extended oral or written discourse as required by the specified grade level oral or written communication in English comparable to English-proficient peers
5 Bridging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> specialized or technical language of the content areas a variety of sentence lengths of varying linguistic complexity in extended oral or written discourse, including stories, essays, or reports oral or written language approaching comparability to that of English-proficient peers when presented with grade-level material
4 Expanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> specific and some technical language of the content areas a variety of sentence lengths of varying linguistic complexity in oral discourse or multiple, related sentences, or paragraphs oral or written language with minimal phonological, syntactic, or semantic errors that do not impede the overall meaning of the communication when presented with oral or written connected discourse with sensory, graphic, or interactive support
3 Developing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> general and some specific language of the content areas expanded sentences in oral interaction or written paragraphs oral or written language with phonological, syntactic, or semantic errors that may impede the communication, but retain much of its meaning, when presented with oral or written, narrative, or expository descriptions with sensory, graphic, or interactive support
2 Beginning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> general language related to the content areas phrases or short sentences oral or written language with phonological, syntactic, or semantic errors that often impede the meaning of the communication when presented with one- to multiple-step commands, directions, questions, or a series of statements with sensory, graphic, or interactive support
1 Entering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> pictorial or graphic representation of the language of the content areas words, phrases, or chunks of language when presented with one-step commands, directions, WH-, choice, or yes/no questions, or statements with sensory, graphic, or interactive support oral language with phonological, syntactic, or semantic errors that often impede meaning when presented with basic oral commands, direct questions, or simple statements with sensory, graphic, or interactive support

Appendix B

ELM Support Tool

Updated October 2018

ELM SUPPORT TOOL

School: _____ Date: _____

Coach: _____ Teacher/Coachee Initials: _____

- ☐ Pre-coaching/support data collection in this classroom
- ☐ Post-coaching/support data collection in this classroom
- ☐ Additional data collection (between or beyond pre- and post-) in this classroom

Total # of students in the classroom: _____

English learners in the classroom:

WIDA Level	Number of Students
WIDA Level 1	
WIDA Level 2	
WIDA Level 3	
WIDA Level 4	
WIDA Level 5	
Recently exited ELs	

If you would like additional space for writing notes, please download this document or make a copy of the google document. You should be able to then add more writing space using your return key in each of the note taking boxes.

Learning Target or Content Objective:

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ACADEMIC LANGUAGE OBJECTIVES (ALOs)

*Directions: Choose the appropriate language level below and fill out the box accordingly. You only need to fill out one of the three boxes: word level, sentence level, **OR** discourse level. See Building Academic Language Objectives document for academic language objective sentence frames and examples.*

Word Level Academic Language Objective: (check all that apply)

- ☐ Language Objective: Word level (vocabulary, morphology, and/or phonology)
 - ☐ Includes a function
 - ☐ Includes vocabulary or phonological/morphological topic
 - ☐ Includes examples of the language
 - ☐ Includes supports

Please write the word level academic language objective here:

--

OR

Sentence Level Academic Language Objective: *(check all that apply)*

- ☐ Language Objective: Sentence level (grammar and/or syntax)
 - ☐ Includes a function
 - ☐ Includes language structure/syntax
 - ☐ Includes examples of the language structure
 - ☐ Includes supports

Please write the sentence level academic language objective here:

OR

Discourse Level Academic Language Objective: *(check all that apply)*

- ☐ Language Structure: Discourse level (genre or text type)
 - ☐ Includes a function
 - ☐ Includes a genre
 - ☐ Includes supports

Please write the discourse level academic language objective here:

STUDENT AWARENESS OF LANGUAGE LEARNING (METALINGUISTIC AWARENESS) *(check all that apply)*

- ☐ Academic language objective is derived from the content objective/learning target
- ☐ Academic language objective is written for students to see
- ☐ Academic language objective is read out loud for students to hear

MULTIMODAL INSTRUCTION

- ☐ All students have the opportunity to:
 - ☐ write
 - ☐ listen
 - ☐ Read
 - ☐ Speak: student to teacher
 - ☐ Speak: student-to-student *(check one)*
 - ☐ No opportunities provided for student-to-student interaction
 - ☐ 1-2 opportunities for student-to-student interaction
 - ☐ 3-4 opportunities for student-to-student interaction

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☐ 5 or more opportunities for student-to-student interaction

☐ The teacher: *(check all that apply)*

- ☐ presents information/instructions orally and in writing
- ☐ reinforces oral language with written cues and/or written material on the board
- ☐ presents visual representations of academic concepts (e.g. pictures, charts, graphs, maps, diagrams, props, realia)
- ☐ uses gestures, facial expressions and/or actions to demonstrate meaning
- ☐ models and/or guides instructional concepts
- ☐ provides dictionaries and/or other word resources available in home language **and** English

Observation Notes:

Optional Topics for Coaching Conversations:

- Is the work hands-on?
- Is the work meaningful/culturally relevant to students?
- Are students engaged throughout the lesson?
- Are all students engaged when the teacher provides opportunities to speak?
- Does the classroom offer a print-rich environment with words relevant to the current topic of instruction?
- Is the room organized so that students know what to focus on during instruction (e.g. clutter-free)?
- What are some additional communication techniques you can incorporate (e.g. inflection of voice, facial expressions, gestures, facing the students when speaking, etc.)?
- How can we ensure that the students understand the language that the teacher uses while also challenging their language learning?
- How can we activate prior knowledge for English learners?
- How can we evaluate and build background knowledge for students?
- How can we develop classroom-based assessments that measure mastery of academic language objectives?
- What should be understood about the various WIDA levels represented in the classroom?
- How can we develop classroom-based assessments that measure the intended content knowledge rather than language knowledge?

Coaching Conversation Notes: